DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 177 414 CG 013 842

AUTHOR	Ladd, Laura; Lynch, Michael
TITLE	Building Support for Juvenile Diversion: A Case Study of the Memphis-Metro Youth Diversion Program.
INSTITUTION	National Office for Social Responsibility, Arlington, Va.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquent Prevention (Dept. of Justice), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	Jun 79
CONTRACT	J-LEAA-008-77
NOTE	42p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Community Programs; Delinquency Prevention; *Delinquent Rehabilitation; Delinquents; Disadvantaged Youth; Justice; *Juvenile Courts; Models; *Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; *Youth Programs
IDENTIFIERS	*Diversion; *Tennessee (Memphis)

ABSTRACT

The juvenile diversion program, Special Emphasis Memphis-Metro Youth Diversion Project, is described. The following areas of concern are addressed: (1) the juvenile justice system in Memphis prior to diversion; (2) project philosophy and community support-building efforts; and (3) implementation efforts through the juvenile court, community agencies, the public, the media, and the project advisory commission. Although geographically specific this program can serve as a model for similar projects dealing with juvenile diversion. (HLM)

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BUILDING SUPPORT FOR JUVENILE DIVERSION

A CASE STUDY OF THE MEMPHIS METRO YOUTH DIVERSION PROGRAM

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June 1979

Prepared for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, LEAA, U.S. Department of Justice by the National Office for Social Responsibility under contract number J-LEAA-008-77. Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

CG013842

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PREFACE

In passing the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, Congress recognized the necessity of providing positive, realistic, and cost effective alternatives to incarceration for many young persons who have been charged with violations of the law. The Act was also intended to relieve the overburdened, overcrowded juvenile justice system, whose effectiveness had been hampered in recent years by ever increasing caseloads and a shortage of beds and other resources in correctional institutions.

In 1976, the OJJDP, acting under the auspices of the Juvenile Justice Act, funded a variety of Special Emphasis Youth Diversion Programs to test various methods of diverting young persons away from the juvenile justice system. Among these was the Memphis-Metro Youth Diversion program. The Memphis project is an example of a very succesful diversion effort. In the first year of operation, over 1500 young persons were able to benefit from the assistance of thirty different community agencies in lieu of direct juvenile court jurisdiction.

Early in the program planning phase, the staff of the Memphis project discovered the critical importance of gaining more than token support from their local communities and the various components of the juvenile justice system. A primary reason for their success has been and continues to be their ability to work closely and cooperatively with the court, the police, intake and probation staff, community agencies, and many interested persons and groups in the Memphis community. This publication documents their effort to secure real support, and the success which it has brought to the program. OJJDP offers this information because it will be useful to others interested in duplicating or learning from the Memphis diversion experience. We hope that it will contribute to a more humane and effective justice system for our young people.

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INTRODUCTION

Public attention has focused in recent years on the problem of youth in correctional facilities. Increasingly, there is recognition that the secure detention of juveniles does little to ameliorate antisocial or criminal behavior and, in fact, may contribute to it. Consequently, the last decade has tested a number of different types of experimental programs designed to provide alternative responses to institutionalization for young persons. One such response is "diversion."

The concept of diversion clearly predates the recent growth in public interest over the incarceration of youthful offenders. Indeed, the practice of removing young people from continued official handling by the court was established prior to the inception of a separate juvenile justice system in the late 1800's. Since that time, however, "diversion" has been defined and redefined so many times that, by the 1970's, a great deal of confusion surrounded both the concept and the term. Everything from early police warning and release to postadjudicatory probation was (and in many areas, still is) lumped under this one rubric. Diversion thus had been given so many meanings as to become meaningless.

Recognizing this problem, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) published its own criteria for diversion in 1976. These criteria established that diversion would only apply to a process by which youth, who otherwise would be adjudicated are referred out of the juvenile justice system sometime after apprehension and prior to adjudication. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention then funded "Special Emphasis" demonstration programs to test a variety of different methods by which diversion could be effectively implemented.

SECTION I: COMMUNITY SUPPORT IS NECESSARY FOR SUCCESSFUL DIVERSION PROJECTS

Over the past two years, the Special Emphasis programs have confronted a wide and representative range of programmatic and political obstacles facing other diversion projects. It is both ironic and unfortunate that, at a time when the general public has expressed an increased concern over the plight of incarcerated youth, the most difficult problem to overcome has proven to be a lack of community and juvenile justice system support. Across the nation, a large number of the OJJDP funded projects -- as well as other diversion programs -- have had their activities stymied by combinations of passive and active opposition.

Although there are differences from site to site, a striking consistency exists in the origins of this opposition. To the extent that they are aware that such initiatives are operating, members of the community may harbor visions of "muggers and thieves being mollycoddled and turned loose to run rampant in the streets." The type of target population specified by the OJJDP criteria (i.e., youth who would normally be adjudicated for a criminal act rather than simply status offenders or neglected children) lends itself particularly easily to irrational charges of this kind. If voiced loudly enough by a sufficiently visible group of citizens, such charges can and have lead to political pressure being placed on those with authority to cancel diversion efforts.

Any of the various components of the juvenile justice system may be opposed to diversion. In some areas, police have viewed diversion programs as working at cross purposes to their efforts by releasing

youth who have required an investment of time and resources to apprehend. Intake and probation personnel may see such initiatives as restricting their authority to make decisions regarding the processing and placement of youth. Some administrators fear that intake and probation caseload reductions, which usually accompany diversion efforts, may result in cutbacks in personnel and resources budgeted to their agencies. Finally, judges may be concerned that these efforts will circumscribe their relatively unchecked discretionary power to make decisions regarding the dispositions of certain youth. Many judges are acutely aware that the court may be blamed if a diverted youth causes serious problems when placed back in the community.

Unfortunately, there is rarely enough support from any quarter to counterbalance this type of opposition. With the exception of a few youth advocacy organizations, no natural constituency exists for diversion programs. The benefits of diversion are not always immediate or tangible enough to engage the active interest and commitment of most individuals and agencies.

Without support, however, diversion projects find their operations hampered, their success limited, and their survival jeopardized. It is hardly surprising to learn that diversion programs attempting to work with antagonistic juvenile justice systems often receive "soft cases"* or an insufficient number of referrals. Obviously, if the local juvenile justice system does not support the program, there will be no diversion.

General public disinterest and apathy must also be overcome before a diversion program can produce effective community based services for diverted youth. Setting up the program and institutionalizing the objectives of such an effort requires the effective solicitation of a variety of community service providers and resources. If this process is to take place, the public must be shown that placement of troubled youth in alternative services works to the benefit of everyone involved. Moreover, a supportive community is generally more willing to create resources which do not already exist to meet the needs of diverted youth.

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*These generally are young persons who would not have been adjudicated in the first place.

The failure of any particular social service program does not, in and of itself, represent a great loss for mankind. On the contrary, many have perished quite deservingly. It is unfortunate, however, when a program with a track record of success in helping troubled youth in some communities, is never given a true opportunity in others because of strong resistance from key actors or the general public. Such has been the fate of more than one diversion project. To avoid a similar end, diversion programs must work from the outset to build juvenile justice system and community support for their endeavors. Obviously, the degree of difficulty entailed in this task will vary greatly from place to place; however, the necessity of such support remains an inescapable constant.

One program which has shown marked success in this area is the Special Emphasis Memphis-Metro Youth Diversion Project. Funded through the Community Day Care and Comprehensive Social Services Association in December 1976 by the OJJDP, it had, as of October 1978, diverted over fifteen hundred youth for offenses ranging from shoplifting to assault and burglary. Moreover, it has set up a referral system which has involved over thrity different community agencies, many of which have received divertees on a no-cost basis. Finally, it has laid the foundation for the process of diversion to continue after federal funds expire. Not surprisingly, each of these achievements have been made possible through the strong base of support the project has been able to establish in the community.

The following case study is presented to suggest some of the methods which may be used to build support for a diversion program. We are not suggesting that all of them will be applicable to any one site. However, it is our belief that the underlying philosophy guiding the project and its implementation will have some relevance to any project attempting to accomplish similar goals.

SECTION II: BACKGROUND--THE JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMUNITY IN MEMPHIS

The extent of the Memphis Project's effectiveness in building support for diversion must be measured against the background of local juvenile justice conditions that existed prior to its operation. More specifically, there existed in Memphis, as in any community, certain factors and relationships which had potential to enhance the program and, alternately, others which might easily have detracted from it. The ultimate success of the Memphis-Metro Youth Diversion Project is, in large part, a product of its efforts to cope with and capitalize on these factors in building support among three major target audiences: the juvenile court, youth serving agencies, and the community.

THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM IN MEMPHIS PRIOR TO DIVERSION

In 1975, approximately ten thousand youth were processed through the Memphis Juvenile Court. Of these, over seven thousand were referred to the court for delinquent acts; the remaining youth were primarily status offenders. The system responsible for dealing directly with these youth consisted principally of the police, one juvenile court judge, a small professional intake staff, and a large volunteer probation organization.

Although the role of each of the actors in the development of the Memphis Project will be explored in detail below, certain key features of the prediversion environment are introduced in the following paragraphs because of their "stage setting" nature for subsequent developments.

THE MEMPHIS POLICE

After making contact with a youth who he believes has committed an offense, a Memphis police officer has three principal options: (1) warn and release, (2) issue a summons for the juvenile to appear in court at a later date and release, and (3) immediately apprehend for detention. Only in the last of these alternatives does the officer have continued responsibility for the youth beyond the point of contact, and then, only until he has brought the young person to the Juvenile Court. In Memphis, the police do not operate juvenile detention facilities -- youth may only be held by the decision of the court. As a result, their role as part of the juvenile justice system is very limited, and consequently, commands little attention as a target for support building.

THE JUVENILE COURT

In a state where juvenile courts tend toward strict conservatism, Judge Kenneth A. Turner is one of a few progressives. His court has demonstrated a strong commitment to limiting the penetration of individual youths into the juvenile justice system. Prior to the Special Emphasis Diversion Project, Judge Turner actively supported the development of a number of innovative programs for youthful offenders in Memphis, including the first volunteer probation staff for adjudicated youth and the Volunteer Next Friend counseling program for pre-adjudicated youth. Even before the Memphis-Metro Youth Diversion Project, Judge Turner had diverted a number of youth to a limited number of community agencies. In fact, official procedures for this alternative were specified in the administrative regulations of the court. However, prior to the Memphis-Metro Youth Diversion Project, only a few juveniles were actually diverted because: (1) court resources available to pay for the placement of youth in community agencies were limited; (2) the amount of time required of court personnel to monitor referral organizations properly was prohibitive and; (3) the court lacked experience with and knowledge about the quality of various youth-serving organizations in Memphis.

Although these factors might suggest that the judge would readily welcome the Special Emphasis Diversion Project, two qualifications

must be made. First, Judge Turner had never allowed an outside organization to function as an appendage to the court. Second, and perhaps more critical, he had refused to allow a project with similar objectives as the Memphis-Metro Youth Diversion Project to become involved in court operations just two years earlier.

In 1973, Memphis received a Comprehensive Youth Service System (CYSS) grant from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. The persons involved in that effort did not elicit wide input or participation from community organizations or the court in the design of the system they wished to implement. It was only when the plan was finalized that it was presented to individuals outside of the CYSS staff, and then as an accomplished fact. This approach alienated many of the persons whose involvement was needed to put the plan into operation. Judge Turner, perceiving that the proposal was both insensitive to the needs of individual agencies while, at the same time, requiring them to relinquish a great deal of autonomy, refused to accept it. Consequently, in more than two years of operation, CYSS was unable to divert any youth.

INTAKE AND PROBATION STAFF

There are two points to highlight in describing the professional intake and probation staff prior to 1975. First, it consisted of a very small number of persons; and second, the Memphis Juvenile Court staff is under the direct administration of the judge. The effects of these two factors are described below.

The relevant features of the all-volunteer Auxiliary Probation Officers were quite different. Although they were also under the purview of the judge, this group consisted of more than six hundred individuals who devoted free time to working with troubled youth. Being the first organization of its kind and having been in existence for years, the Auxiliary Probation Officers had developed a strong esprit d'corps. Moreover, though their effectiveness had been questioned in some circles, the court was pleased with their performance.

COMMUNITY YOUTH SERVING AGENCIES PRIOR TO DIVERSION

Memphis has approximately fifty organizations which provide services to young persons. Taken together, they are a strikingly diverse group, both in terms of the types and quality of services they offer. However, prior to 1975, they had a number of common characteristics which subsequently became important factors in the development of the Memphis Project.

First, each of the youth serving agencies in Memphis traditionally had operated autonomously from the rest. Consequently, there tended to be little contact and less cooperation between different organizations interested in helping young people. Indeed, competition for scarce resources created intense rivalry among several of the agencies. This condition had consistently blocked efforts to establish an effective youth-serving network.

A case in point was the CYSS program mentioned above. It was seen by many of the agencies as a future competitor in the struggle for dollars in Memphis. In addition, it represented, in many minds, a threat to organizational independence while offering few tangible benefits in return. Consequently, few persons mourned the passing of CYSS. And, unfortunately, the CYSS attempt generated negative feelings about the concept of a network of services for youth which outlasted the project's brief duration.

A second characteristic common to most youth-serving agencies in Memphis was inexperience with the type of youth who would later be selected for the Diversion Project's target population. The young people who make up this population historically had not participated in agency programs because they either did not know about them or could not affort to pay for them. Nor did most agencies seek to include those juveniles thought to be disruptive to their operations.

A final generalization which applied to many of the organizations was that they were, in the mid 1970's, beginning to experience a reduction in the size of their clientele. The massive tide of young people brought about by the post-war population boom had already swept past, leaving in its wake a growing concern on the part of youth serving agencies as to the source of their future clienteles.

As in the case of the Court, these various factors combined to create an ambivalent environment in which the Diversion Project was to commence operations.

THE PUBLIC PRIOR TO DIVERSION

As in many communities, the general public in Memphis was, and largely still is, unaware of the functioning of the juvenile court. This is not to say that there were not segments of the population who were vocally for or against it; however, neither public opposition to nor support for the court influenced it significantly.

Moreover, though polls would suggest that the citizens of Memphis were quite representative of the rest of the nation in their concern with crime in 1975, there were no serious public outcries for harsher treatment of juvenile offenders. This provides a striking contrast to the mood prevalent in other major cities where highly publicized violent acts by youth resulted in increased community intolerance.

SECTION III: BUILDING COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR DIVERSION IN MEMPHIS--The Project Philosophy

The problematic features of the Memphis setting for a youth diversion project were recognized by those involved prior to the development of the pre-application forms for OJJDP. The familiarity of these persons with the recent history of the juvenile justice system, the various community agencies, and the general public fostered the realization that building support for their efforts might be a difficult, long-term process. They knew that the Diversion Program would succeed only if was able to establish broad based support within the juvenile justice system and the community.

Consequently, the program developed a philosophy to promote positive interactions with individuals, agencies, and groups whose support was necessary to the program. Originally adopted by those first involved and subsequently expanded by the Project Director, Michael Whitaker, this approach to building support is both effective and easily implemented. Moreover, it has resulted in tangible benefits which extend beyond support building. Indeed, in many cases, the increased support derived from particular types of interactions between the Project and those outside has been a secondary dividend rather than the primary objective. The Project's basic orientation toward building support within the Memphis community has been guided by four distinct concepts: Building Credibility, Co-Optation, Symbiosis, and Assumption of a Nonthreatening Stance.

I. BUILDING CREDIBILITY

Most simply, credibility may be defined as a sense of trust held in one by others that he is what he purports to be. The different individuals responsible for the Diversion Program have demonstrated an ongoing commitment to the belief that Project credibility is vital to the successful functioning of their operation. They have therefore been painstaking in their efforts to demonstrate the Project's honesty and reliability.

Admonitions stressing strict project honesty appear to be among the maxims most readily accepted in theory and quickly discarded in practice. Unfortunately, there sometimes arises a perceived need on the part of an organizational entity to display only its better features while taking steps to mask or completely hide its shortcomings. Moreover, there is a tendency for agencies, particularly those dependent on outside funds, to overstate their capabilities in an effort to inflate their appearance of worth to the funding body and to the community.

Recognizing this fact, the staff of the Memphis-Metro Youth Diversion Project have pursued a very different strategy. Throughout the course of the program, they have rigidly adhered to a policy of informing interested parties about specific program objectives, progress to date, reasonable future potential, and possible and actual limitations. This has amounted to a determined effort not to oversell the Project beyond its capabilities.

More importantly, the different individuals involved have been, as a group, forthright about failures they have had and mistakes they have made. They have not simply admitted responsibility when confronted with their errors; rather they have taken action to inform relevant persons of problems which the Project has identified. There are two advantages to this approach: first, negative disclosures issued by the program tend to be less damaging than when they are discovered or uncovered by outside sources, and second, by admitting its mistakes and problems, the Project staff has been able to elicit the assistance and support of outsiders to remedy the difficulty.

Another cornerstone, upon which the Project has built its credibility in the community, is a continued demonstration of reliability. In an effort to develop and maintain such a reputation, the Project staff has

gone beyond the minimum of seeing that commitments are kept. It has applied itself to the often difficult task of ensuring that its relationship with each of the key individuals or organizations with which it functions is clearly understood by both parties. Whenever possible, the staff has developed agreements (both written and verbal) which specify the responsibilities and expectations of each side. The result has been a clear delineation of the Project's responsibilities and commitments. By insisting on specific agreements, the Project has been able to avoid a variety of unnecessary and burdensome complications.

The Project has also sought to develop a consistent pattern of interactions with diverse elements in the community. The groups with which the Project works have, by and large, been spared the problems caused by constant modifications in the manner in which the Project deals with them. Moreover, when a revision of functions has been required, agencies have been apprised well in advance and invited to offer recommendations.

Since start-up activities, the Project has built a reputation for reliability in the Memphis community by providing a resource others can turn to for information and assistance. On numerous occasions, representatives from the court, referral agencies, state organizations, and even the public have requested and received help from the Project staff.

Clearly the manner in which the Diversion Project has approached the Memphis juvenile justice system and community has contributed to its acceptance. In the relatively short period of its existence, the Project's credibility has been consolidated due to its ongoing success in diverting young persons from the juvenile justice system, and placing them with appropriate community services.

Juvenile justice personnel, community agency staff, and other individuals have been continuously impressed with the manner in which the Project has approached its goals. The latter has repeatedly demonstrated logical and efficient methods for accomplishing objectives while at the same time considering the needs of other groups with which it works.

In addition, the Project has had such success in proving the viability of the diversion concept that it has received acclaim from such bodies

as the Tennessee SPA, legislative committees, and OJJDP itself. It has also been given favorable attention from the local media. The feedback from these various sources to the Memphis community has acted to reinforce and highlight the fact that it has an exemplary program within its midst.

II. CO-OPTATION

For the purposes of this document, co-optation may be defined as a method through which an individual or organization engages the support of specific outside parties by actively involving them in its own operations and activities. This approach is based on the assumption that a person brought into a group develops a stake in that group's continued existence and well being. The person is therefore more inclined to devote time and resources to the group, and is likely to be more supportive and sympathetic to projects and activities which the group undertakes.

Unfortunately, both the word and the process of co-optation have developed some negative connotations because of past usage. More specifically, its usage at the hands of a few organizations has given it a reputation as a questionable practice designed to deceive, flatter, and mute potential criticism. However, such ends are neither inherent to the process of co-optation nor the purposes for which it is legitimately employed. Co-optation can be a very effective method of increasing a group's capabilities and support while concurrently providing tangible benefits to the various contributors.

The advantages of this strategy have been recognized and pursued by the Memphis Project. From the earliest stages to the present, persons responsible for the Project have successfully identified and involved individuals and groups whose participation would enhance the effectiveness of the program. A variety of benefits have accrued to the Project due to the co-optation strategy. These include:

- the variety of expertise and experience held by those brought in;
- a greater knowledge of the needs and resources of Memphis;
- a better understanding of the specific concerns, expectations, and desires of the agencies being represented by outside participants; and

- support from those who are "co-opted" which includes an investment of their energies and a willingness to advocate for the Project in the community.

On the other hand, the rewards for those brought in are primarily threefold:

- the ability to influence the development of the goals and operations of a program designed to assist troubled youth;
- the knowledge that they are influencing the ways in which youth serving agencies in Memphis deal with their clients and each other; and
- according to many of them, a psychological profit from being a part of a program that is both effective and beginning to gain some prominence in the community.

Finally, the principal reasons for the success of the co-optation strategy used in Memphis are:

- The Project has taken great care to identify and involve individuals who are both capable and committed to the task. In addition, they have been selected from a number of different kinds of organizations and disciplines, providing the Project with an excellent mix of abilities from which to draw.
- Individuals have been given substantial roles in the process. Their participation, thus, has not been for the sake of "window-dressing."
- The Project has been meticulous in its efforts to credit publicly outside participants involved as being an integral part of its endeavors.

III. SYMBIOSIS

In biology, symbiosis most commonly refers to a relationship between two organisms through which each derives benefit. In such relationships, the benefits themselves, rather than other intervening variables, are in fact the reason for the association. Symbiotic realtionships tend to be quite stable as long as each participant continues to profit satisfactorily from it.

In a very real sense, the Memphis-Metro Youth Diversion Program adopted the concept of symbiosis to guide its interactions with a number of

organizations. Specifically, the Project has attempted to develop ties with outside agencies and groups which are predicated on clearly recognized benefits to each side. This is not to suggest that the mutually supportive nature of every relationship is paid explicit tribute to; on the contrary, if the Project too loudly celebrated its usefulness to certain organizations, it could cause the latter to withdraw from the association. However, each side does have an awareness that it has received benefits from its connection with the other.

In building effective symbiotic relationships, the Diversion Project has had to employ special qualities. The most important of these are described below.

SENSITIVITY TO OTHER'S NEEDS

Unlike those found in nature, symbiotic relationships between organizations rarely evolve spontaneously. The possibility and extent of mutual gain often goes unrecognized by one or both of the parties. Accordingly, the individuals responsible for the Diversion Project have worked at length to assess the real (as opposed to simply stated) needs of the agencies with which they wish to function. With this information, they have been able to determine the ways in which the Project, either as already developed or with modifications, could benefit the latter. The Project has consequently been much better prepared to demonstrate, to otherwise uninterested agencies, the advantages that would accrue to them through an association with the diversion program.

FLEXIBILITY

Because different organizations have different needs, the Project has had to demonstrate flexibility in the ways in which it deals with other agencies. For example, the Project learned at an early point that offering only one type of benefit, such as monetary compensation, to the different community agencies would be ineffective. Therefore, as discussed below, the Project developed additional services to exchange for the participation and assistance of the various community organizations.

ADAPTABILITY

As the needs of the organizations with which it works have changed over time, the Project has found that it must vary the types of benefits it provides. With such adaptability, the satisfaction of the relationship to the participating agency and, therefore, the relationship itself, might be jeopardized.

IV. A NONTHREATENING STANCE

Perhaps the most critical underlying principle used to guide the Project is the necessity of assuming and maintaining a nonthreatening posture in the community. As discussed in the introduction, diversion programs tend to be viewed with concern and distrust by some elements in their environments. In Memphis, the tendency was compounded by the recent CYSS experience. The combination of these factors convinced the persons responsible for the Project of the absolute necessity of projecting a nonthreatening image throughout all activities. To achieve this end, five features of the Project have been particularly important.

PUBLIC INFORMATION

From the outset the Project staff strove to establish and maintain clear lines of communication to the juvenile justice system and local youth serving agencies. The Project sought to inform the community as to its goals and the means by which it intended to achieve them. It has, in recent months, begun to place an equal priority on getting this information out to the public at large. The result of these efforts has been to keep unfounded rumors and criticism to a minimum, and to project a positive image for the Project.

LIMITED DURATION OF PROJECT

Initially, some community agencies were concerned that the Diversion Project would become another permanent competitor for limited resources. To combat this inaccuracy, the Project's administrators and staff have continually stressed that the Memphis-

Metro Youth Diversion Project is a three year demonstration effort which will be phased out at the end of that period. They have stressed the need for the community itself to continue diversion at that time, thereby suggesting a future role for such agencies in the delivery of services to diverted youth.

AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE COMMUNITY

While emphasizing its limited duration, the Project has also promoted the notion that it is part of the Memphis community. In other words, it has continually emphasized the fact that although funded from Washington, the program was designed, developed, and run by local people attempting to solve a local problem.

SELF-RESTRAINT OVER OUTSIDE INVOLVEMENT

Program personnel have been very careful to limit their interventions into the activities of the organizations with which they work. The Project's position from the beginning has been to assist outside agencies in doing their job better without doing it for them. At times, this has been a difficult balance to achieve while concurrently ensuring an adequate degree of accountability from referral sources. However, the Project has, to date, been quite successful by working with deficient agencies to overcome their shortcomings rather than unilaterally demanding solutions without offering assistance.

In terms of the juvenile justice system, the Project has taken great care to avoid overstepping its authority. The philosophy of the program is that, although it is not under the direct administrative control of the Judge, it is in a subordinate position to him. It has, therefore, been unwavering in its efforts to clear all major decisions and changes through the Court.

MANDATES FROM HIGH AUTHORITIES

In certain instances, the Project, with consent from the appropriate sources, has indicated that unpopular policy decisions are

not their own making, but rather the requirements either of the Tennessee State Planning Agency or the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in Washington. This approach has been used particularly with emotionally charged issues over which the Project did not have control (e.g., the general exclusion of status offenders from the population) and for which heated discussions would have been futile. This has helped remove the Project from the role of the "bad guy" in unstable situations, and has avoided several potentially debilitating battles.

This section has presented a synopsis of the guiding philosophy which enabled the Memphis Project staff to build a successful program. The section which follows shows how this philosophy was implemented in Memphis.

SECTION IV: IMPLEMENTING THE MEMPHIS DIVERSION PROJECT PHILOSOPHY

WORKING WITH THE JUVENILE COURT

One reason that the CYSS project failed was that its administrators and staff did not elicit the active involvement of the juvenile court in developing its program. To avoid a similar fate, representatives from the Community Day Care and Comprehensive Social Services Association (CDC), parent agency to the proposed Special Emphasis Diversion program, met with Juvenile Court Judge Turner at the beginning of the application stage. OJJDP requirements, primary goals, and possible methods were outlined and discussed at that time. Nothing was presented to the Judge as an immutable decision. On the contrary, CDC representatives emphasized that the Diversion Project was to be, in a sense, as much the court's as their own. Accordingly, every effort was made to incorporate the court's thoughts and recommendations into the philosophy and structure of the Project.

The Judge, who was aware of CDC's excellent reputation and interested in the potential offered by its conception of diversion, gave his endorsement to pursuing the application process further. In addition, he agreed to CDC's request that he develop a list of offense categories from which he would be willing to divert young people. Finally, he appointed his chief probation officer to work on the committee being formed by CDC to research and write the initial project proposal.

The precedent of encouraging in depth juvenile court involvement has been rigorously adhered to throughout the Project's existence. In fact, the court has been active in many areas of Project operation. For example, the juvenile court is responsible for primary screening of juveniles to decide appropriateness for diversion. Its decisions are then transferred to Project personnel for secondary screening. The two organizations work closely in this process. In addition, the chief probation officer, originally on the application committee, was appointed, after grant award, to the Project's overseeing Advisory Committee.

Moreover, the Project has instituted patterns of interaction which insure that the juvenile court will be satisfied with its involvement in diversion activities. The Project Director and staff have worked vigorously to create and maintain good communications with juvenile court personnel. Proposed changes in program operations of any significance are reported to the Judge for review and comment prior to implementation. The court is kept abreast of potential and actual problems that arise regarding diversion and is solicited for recommendations. Finally, the Project Director meets with the Judge to discuss the Project's status and areas of needed improvement.

The benefits of this approach are manifold. First, the Project never had to sell the court on objectives and operations precisely because the court helped formulate them. Accordingly, the Project is viewed quite accurately as a product of the court's work as well as that of CDC. This fact has increased the court's support and advocacy for the diversion program. Second, a mandated responsibility of the juvenile court is to insure that troubled youth receive the best services appropriate to the situation. This, coupled with the inescapable fact that the court will be held accountable by the public for any further antisocial behavior of diverted youth, requires that it monitor the Diversion Project. To the extent that the latter reduces the burden of this task, it reinforces the court's enthusiasm for this alternative. Third, the close involvement of the court and the Project at all levels of program decision-making reduces the likelihood that an adversary relationship will develop, a dynamic through which the Project quite obviously becomes the loser. And fourth, the communication system, which has been developed keeps the Project constantly aware of the court's changing needs, thereby better enabling the former to respond appropriately and quickly.

PROJECT AND COURT: A "WIN-WIN" RELATIONSHIP

The CDC, and the individuals working with it to develop the OJJDP Diversion grant application, recognized at an early stage that continued court support would pivot on the extent to which the Diversion Project could provide it with tangible programmatic payoffs. Therefore, the individuals responsible for the Project have, from the outset, sought to structure their objectives and activities toward this end.

For example, Judge Turner, as explained earlier, had been diverting some youth even prior to the Diversion Project. However, because the court lacked experience with most community agencies and had limited financial and time resources, only a very few juvenile offenders were given this alternative. The Diversion Project offered the Judge an effective solution to this problem. CDC had operated in Memphis for years and was well informed as to existing services. Moreover, the Advisory Committee responsible for the review and approval of proposals from agencies wishing to receive diverted youth consists of individuals from a variety of community organizations. Together, they are knowledgeable about the types and qualities of available local programs. This resource, coupled with the Project's capability to pay for services for diverted youth, effectively increased Judge Turner's capacity to pursue an end in which he had already shown interest.

Another benefit the Diversion Project has offered both the Judge and his staff is reduced caseloads. In the first year of operation, over one thousand youth were removed from the juvenile justice system before contact with the Judge. The professional probation staff has been relieved of the responsibility of directly monitoring this group. Although such reductions have, in other localities, raised the spectre of job cutbacks, the small size of the professional juvenile probation staff in Memphis precluded this concern.

The Diversion Project did, however, represent a potential threat to the Auxiliary Probation Officers. With less youth being processed through the juvenile justice system, fewer were being sent to this organization. However, the Diversion Project was again able to impress upon potential opponents the benefits of its operation. The Auxiliary Probation Officers had been formed to fill the gap in services being provided to troubled young people. When the Project demonstrated to them that it was able to gain access to a greater variety of programs

than the Auxiliary Probation Officers, most officers readily accepted it.

Maintaining a symbiotic relationship with the juvenile court has required the Diversion Project to be flexible and willing to compromise. For instance, some initial problems were caused by the randomization process used by the program. To conform to the national evaluation being performed by OJJDP, the Project randomizes potential divertees into three categories; diversion with services, diversion without services, and no diversion (regular processing through the system). In the initial stages, some parents complained when their children were sent to different categories than their peers. Consequently, the Project agreed to the juvenile court's request to randomize groups of juveniles involved in the same offense together.

Another problem requiring accomodation early in the process focused on the extent to which a possible divertee must incriminate him/herself in demonstrating eligibility for the program. According to OJJDP guidelines, youth should not have to make an admission of guilt as a prerequisite for diversion. However, the court was concerned that juveniles who were not guilty as charged would be deprived of due process without proper discussion of the charges. The compromise reached, was that a young person meeting the target criteria and de siring to enter the Project must make a verbal acknowledgment of involvement (though not guilt) in the offense which comes in the form of a decision not go go through the court process to establish innocence. Although this solution does not fully meet the original wishes of either organization, it is acceptable to both.

Any impression of the Project's willingness to compromise as unlimited or of the juvenile court as "running roughshod" over the program, however, would be inaccurate. The Diversion Project has been unwaivering in its adherence to certain OJJDP guidelines, such as barring status offenders and adjudicated youth from participation. This has, at times, meant refusing to accept juveniles sent by the juvenile court. However, the Project's general tendency toward flexibility has allowed it to work with the court cooperatively, rather than antagonistically, to resolve such differences.

The key to the effectiveness of this cooperative interaction is that neither organization views the resolution of problems as a "zero-sum game," whereby the success of one side requires the failure of the other. Rather "win-win" solutions have been sought which benefit both parties. The direct referral process provides a good example. In the development of the original target population, Judge Turner excluded certain types of offenders because he was concerned that they might be randomized to the no service group. However, both he and the project were interested that these youth still be eligible for diversion services. Consequently, an agreement was reached that these juveniles would bypass the randomization process and be diverted by direct referral from the Judge prior to adjudication. Both parties benefit because the Judge is able to divert certain youth with the guarantee that they will receive services while the Project receives a larger caseload.

This cooperation and flexibility has developed an interdependence between the Diversion Project and the juvenile court. The necessity of such a relationship to the success of a diversion program is inescapable; it need not be so for a juvenile court. However, the Memphis-Metro Youth Diversion Project has continually demonstrated the positive payoff for the court in maintaining this interaction.

PROJECT EFFECTIVENESS--A KEY TO COURT SUPPORT

The Diversion Project's proven effectiveness has been an instrumental factor in its success in building support with the juvenile court. Its ability to develop a network of referral services, place juveniles in agency programs, make the agencies accountable, and monitor the progress of diverted youth has contributed substantially to the court's favorable view of its activities. In addition, growing data indicates that the recidivism rate of Project youth is much lower than a comparable control group. Consequently, Judge Turner and his staff are able to divert young offenders with confidence that they will be dealt with in an effective manner. As the court has gained experience and confidence with the Diversion Project, it has referred increasing numbers of young people with offense charges of a more serious nature.

There is another way in which the Diversion Project's effectiveness has stimulated court support. As its success along a number of dimensions has gained public attention, both locally and nationally, the Project

has been the subject of recognition and acclaim. Due to its close working relationship with the juvenile court, the Project has reflected well on the court. Moreover, the Diversion Project has repeatedly attributed its success to the court. The attainment of such recognition in the national community of juvenile justice specialists as well as in the eyes of the Memphis general public has tended to reinforce court support for diversion services and alternatives in Memphis.

AGENCIES

The Memphis-Metro Youth Diversion Project would have not gotten beyond the planning stage without the support of the juvenile court. Laying the foundation for this support, therefore, became the Project's first and, in the long run, most important task. However, the CDC committee responsible for the development of the program recognized that its relative success would eventually also turn on the extent to which it could gain the cooperation of the community youth serving agencies.

The Diversion Project's dependence on youth serving agency support has stemmed from a number of considerations. First, the Project needs the availability of a variety of services to which it may refer diverted juveniles. The Project staff itself does not have the resources or range of skills necessary to meet the differing needs of youth with whom it deals. And in fact, provision of all such services by the staff would undermine one of the Project's principal objectives, i.e., the development of a community network of services for divertees. Without the active involvement of the existing Memphis youth serving agencies, no such network could be developed.

On another level, the Diversion Project needed at least the acquiescence of these agencies to its operations to avoid the problems encountered by CYSS. The very number of youth serving organizations as well as their importance in the Memphis community made them potentially formidable political opponents. Their ability to shape public opinion about diversion in general and the Project in particular could have resulted in great pressure on the juvenile court to withdraw its approval.

Finally, the Project needs the support of these agencies if it is to develop a commitment to diversion in Memphis which extends beyond the present flow of federal funds. When the Project terminates as planned,

increased responsibility for diverted juveniles will be transferred both to the juvenile court and the youth serving agencies. The Project has consequently worked to make the latter not simply accepting of diversion, but rather, proponents of it.

INITIAL CONTACT WITH AGENCIES

From the outset, the individuals responsible for the Project wished to develop a strong working relationship with community youth serving agencies. Whether the reverse was initially true is at least doubtful. The problems involved with CYSS, suspicions about federal programs, and concern over new rivals for local funds were all factors that could have acted to minimize enthusiasm for the Diversion Project.

The Project began its efforts to mitigate these concerns immediately after the award of the OJJDP grant. The Project Director, J. Michael Whitaker, first personally conducted a survey of approximately fifty of the youth serving agencies. His purpose was two-fold; one, to identify the services currently available to youth in Memphis; and two, to explain to the agencies' staffs and administrators the goals and plans of the diversion program. By taking this tack, Whitaker could answer questions and concerns before they grew into unfounded points of contention. At the same time, he was able to break down some feelings of resistance to federally funded programs residual from the CYSS experience.

These efforts were continued at a prebidders conference held four months after the grant award. The conference was publicized and opened to all interested parties. The result was a turn-out of over one hundred and twenty persons from seventy-six agencies. At that time, the Project's objectives and means for accomplishing them were again explained in some detail. In addition, state and federal guidelines were set forth as well as application procedures for all agencies interested in contracting with the Project. The agencies were also informed as to the selection criteria to be used in determining with which organizations the Project would eventually enter agreements. The purpose behind the detailed transfer of information was to insure that the agencies very clearly understood both how and what the Project intended to accomplish and the ways in which it would affect the agencies. It was hoped that this approach would prevent future misunderstandings and allay any fears that might already have arisen.

To further this end, the director stressed that the Diversion Project was not an exercise in "empire-building." The youth serving agencies would continue to operate autonomously. The Project was not there to do the agencies' jobs for them but rather, to assist them in working with a new clientele. Moreover, the Diversion Project would be gone in three years and therefore did not represent a future rival for local dollars. This nonthreatening stance has been strictly adhered to throughout the Project's operation.

Also emphasized at the prebidders' conference was the fact that, although funded by Washington, the Diversion Project was a Memphis program. It had been designed by local individuals to provide better services to troubled community youth. It was to be operated by a staff consisting of local persons and given direction by an Advisory Committee made up of respected Memphians.

However, some concern still did arise over certain state and federal guidelines. A few agencies felt that the Diversion Project was somehow responsible for the unpopular rules, and that the Project was being given license to enforce these rules arbitrarily when dealing with the agencies. Both of these concerns were at least partially mitigated by the State Planning Agency's (SPA) representative, Ms. Linda O'Neal. She emphasized to the agencies that the guidelines came directly from the state and Washington and were not the product of the Project. Moreover, she asserted that all guidelines would be strictly enforced through the SPA. The effect of these statements was to remove the Diversion Project from a role which had potential to attract great hostility and shift that burden to the SPA. By emphasizing that not only the subcontractors, but the Project itself was subordinate to the SPA with respect to these guidelines, Ms. O'Neal helped foster a common bond between the Project and the agencies.

The prebidders' conference was primarily a forum in which the Diversion Project could introduce itself and state its need for assistance from the youth serving organizations. However, it also provided the Project with an opportunity to speak generally about what it could do for agencies with which it worked. One, the Project was prepared to pay agencies for each diverted juvenile referred to it. Two, the receipt of youth from a population which had not traditionally received services would enable the agencies to increase their clienteles at a time when they tended to be decreasing. Three, the fact that the agencies which

became involved would be working to help troubled youth was information that could potentially improve their images in the eyes of their own advisory boards and the community at large. Four, the Project staff emphasized the expanded role the agencies would play in working with diverted youth when the Project terminated. And five, the Project offered to assist the agencies in improving their own operations through training and technical assistance. In sum, the Project staff attempted to make it apparent that the advantages to be gained by the existence of the Project far outweighed any concerns felt by the agencies about it.

The Project continued to lay the groundwork for a cooperative relationship with the youth serving agencies in another conference three months later. The focus of this second meeting was the instruction of interested agencies in the development of proposals to be considered by the Project Advisory Committee. Project staff attempted to "demystify" the proposal submission process by giving concrete examples, suggesting appropriate formats, and answering specific questions as to structure, length, and writing of various proposals. The conference also served to communicate a better understanding of the concepts and procedures central to the Diversion Project. Finally, the Project staff offered to provide individual assistance to agencies developing proposals.

In addition to providing information which would result in proposals of a higher quality, the Project staff was given the opportunity to restate its position vis-a-vis the agencies. Moreover, the second conference offered tangible evidence to the agencies that the Project was not going to attempt to dictate to them, but rather, wanted to work with them to help troubled youth.

FLEXIBILITY

As with the juvenile court, the Project found that the development of mutually supportive relationships with the agencies required flexibility and adaptability on its part. For example, the Project had intended to negotiate contracts quickly with specific agencies and begin its regular operation. However, some of the organizations to which the Project wished to send youth remained somewhat skeptical about diversion. They were hesitant to enter into written agreements from which they might later desire to withdraw. They were concerned

about how the diverted youth would affect their programs. Finally, some of the more secure organizations were not interested in developing a financial dependence on the Project.

Rather than lose the services of the hesitant agencies, the Project proposed to them that the program begin with a "no-cost" test group of one hundred youth. The agencies thereby would be given an opportunity to determine whether they wished to continue to work with the Project. As further incentive, the Project gave agencies the option of foregoing written agreements. In return, the agencies would provide services to these first one hundred youth at no cost to the Project.

Eighteen agencies immediately agreed to this arrangement with the number increasing with time. The experiment turned out to be a greater success than anticipated. Not only did all of the participating agencies continue their involvement with the Project, but a number subsequently agreed to hold open no-cost slots in their programs for divertees on a semi-permanent basis. They have thereby been able to keep the maintain their ability to withdraw from continued involvement if they wish. For its part, the Project has gained the benefit of referral sources it would not otherwise have; in addition, it does not have to reimburse these agencies for their services.

PROBLEM RESOLUTION

The foundation layed in the early days of the Diversion Project for cooperative relationships with the youth serving agencies has proven invaluable in ameliorating subsequent controversies. For example, the Project has responsibility for monitoring the agencies with which it works to ensure that they are providing adequate services to diverted youth. The very existence of this monitoring has been an issue of contention between some of the referral organizations and the Project from the beginning. This sore point has then been compounded in those instances when the Project staff have discovered problems or been dissatisfied with the work of individual agencies. However, serious conflict has been avoided in almost all cases due to the strength of favorable pre-existing relationships with the agencies, and the Project's philosophy in dealing with this type of situation. Specifically, rather than issue orders for unilateral problem resolution, the Project has identified the source of its dissatisfaction and worked closely

with the agency in correcting it. Threats are foregone in virtually all situations as dysfunctional.

It should be emphasized that, regardless of its nonthreatening manner, the Project has had a high degree of success in resolving this type of problem. As might be expected, this method has demanded greater effort on the part of the Project staff. However, the pay-off has been the achievement of the results desired without jeopardizing the relationships that have been built.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The Project has also developed innovative ways to assist the youth serving agencies. For example, a number of the referral organizations desired training and/or technical assistance to expand their staff capabilities. The Project has sought to meet this need in two ways. One, it has used its own staff to provide direct training to individual agencies around specific problems, such as budgeting, case management, and staffing. And two, the Project has funded a number of conferences and seminars hosted by the Memphis State University Co-op. The Co-op, under contract to the Project, has organized and sponsored quarterly workshops designed primarily to train youth serving agency staffs in particular topic areas. In choosing the subject matter for each conference, the Co-op and Project have solicited suggestions from the agencies as to the types of training which would be most beneficial to them. To date, these topics have included such areas as youth employment, family counseling, and new roles for youth. For each conference, the Project has brought in nationally known experts to participate. The staffs of the agencies have been able to receive excellent instruction which improves their capabilities, and the credibility of the Project as an organization which is able to assist the agencies through the provision of this type of expertise has been enhanced.

The collective result of these different efforts has been the building of strong symbiotic relationships between the Project and the youth serving organizations with which it works. Moreover, the reputation of the Project has grown so that increasing numbers of local agencies have expressed interest in working with diverted youth. This has enabled the Project to offer diverted youth a wider range of services to meet their needs. In addition, agency support and enthusiasm, coupled with

comparable backing from the juvenile court, has produced guarantees that diversion of youth will continue to take place after federal funds terminate.

GENERAL PUBLIC

The purposes of building general public support for diversion are often less obvious than for building support within the juvenile justice system and youth serving agencies. The community at large is not involved in the day-to-day functioning of such an effort. Indeed, a diversion program may operate for years without the average person having knowledge of or interest in its existence. Nor does this lack of public involvement necessarily prevent such projects from successfully diverting youth from the juvenile justice system to alternative community services. Consequently, many diversion projects have assigned a low priority to the task of building community support.

The results of this short-sighted approach have often been disastrous for diversion projects employing it. It is true that members of the general public are usually both ignorant and apathetic about the functioning of the juvenile justice system. In such an environment, it is possible for diversion to operate smoothly. However, if some circumstance or group acts to raise the public consciousness to the program in a negative way, the project may find itself engaged in a losing struggle. All it may take is for one diverted youth to be involved in a well publicized crime before pressure is placed on the juvenile court to cancel the program. If the project has not built a constituency for itself prior to this situation, it may not be able to offset the criticism against it.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES

To avoid a similar fate, CDC began planning a strategy for building community support at the outset. Its first major action in this regard was the identification and solicitation of knowledgeable individuals from the Memphis community to actually develop the original grant proposal. CDC staff worked at some length to select and involve persons who had expertise in particular areas that the proposal would have to address, and were well respected in the community. The benefits of

this approach proved three-fold: one, the knowledge and commitment brought to bear by this committee produced a proposal which was chosen ahead of hundreds of others received by OJJDP; two, the Diversion Project immediately was endowed with a "borrowed credibility" from the committee members; and three, committee members, having devoted a great deal of time and energy to developing a superior program, were willing, if necessary, to defend it to the community at large. Hence, a small but influential advocacy group for diversion was formed in the initial stages of the Project.

Once the Project was funded, CDC used much the same approach in forming an ongoing Advisory Committee. Again, knowledgeable and respected individuals from various sectors of the community were identified and asked to join. Some of those chosen were from the original proposal development committee; the remainder were individuals selected to expand the range of expertise in the group.

The Advisory Committee was immediately given specific tasks to undertake. In general, its primary role is to review and evaluate proposals from youth-serving organizations desiring to work with the Project. In this work, committee members have complete and final authority. They choose the agencies to which the Project will divert youth. In addition, the Advisory Committee assists the Project monitor in its contracts with the service providers. In this role, the Committee has the power to cancel contracts with unresponsive agencies, a power which it has invoked on occasion. Finally, the Advisory Committee acts as a sounding board for proposed programmatic changes for diversion, offering input as to the community's perspective over such modifications.

Certain dynamics involved in the relationships between the Project and the two committees are important to highlight. First, the primary reason for establishing the committees was to provide the Project with repositories of expertise capable of accomplishing specific tasks. Thus, the development of a constituency for diversion accompanying the formation of the committees was an intended, but secondary objective.

Second, CDC's and the Project's top priority in the selection of members for the committee was the involvement of individuals best qualified to contribute conceptually and substantively to the Project's development. Accordingly, no premium was placed on identifying persons who would unquestioningly accept the program's goals and plans. On the

contrary, certain members of both committees were chosen with the expectation that they would be critical of the concept. However, it was believed (and in fact has materialized) that these persons' conflicting ideas would make for a stronger program. Moreover, because of the investment of time, and because many of their ideas have been incorporated in the Project's design, committee members have become strong diversion supporters.

Third, the fact that both committees were given a great deal of responsibility for the Project can not be overstated in importance. This approach is distinctly different from that taken by some diversion programs which have attempted to set up a puppet group with no real authority. Whereas the latter have usually encountered difficulty in maintaining any interest by committee members, the Memphis-Metro Youth Diversion Project committee members have remained active and enthusiastic throughout their tenures. This high level of commitment may also be attributed to the care with which they were selected in the first place.

Fourth, as with other groups, committee support for diversion is particularly due to the symbiotic relationships that the Project and the committees developed. In return for the time and expertise devoted by committee members, a variety of intangible, yet nonetheless, meaningful dividends have been received. The Project Director and staff have continuously attributed the program's success to committee efforts. Members have, therefore, collectively received local recognition for their work. As the reputation of the Memphis-Metro Youth Diversion Project has grown, members of both committees have received the satisfaction of knowing that they have helped design and operate an exemplary program gaining some national recognition. Finally, the committee members have received psychological benefits from the knowledge that the Project has proven itself capable of effectively meeting the needs of a segment of local youth previously destined for incarceration.

REACHING THE MORE GENERAL PUBLIC

There were three principal factors which determined the Diversion Project's initial strategy to build support for the program throughout the community. On the one hand, the Memphis Project, unlike some in

other cities, was not confronting a particularly hostile public sentiment against youthful offenders. Although crime was considered a pressing local problem by the citizenry, there had been no sustained movement for harsher treatment of delinquents. On the other hand, however, there was some public controversy about an adult diversion project which was in operation. Both the Project and the juvenile court were concerned that the youth diversion program might be identified with the adult program and come under public attack. In addition, Judge Turner hesitated to publicize the Project's activities until enough data was available to begin evaluating its relative success.

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

On the basis of its assessment of these factors, the Project adopted a relatively informal strategy for building public support in its early stages. Rather than launch the program in a blare of media fanfare, the Project Director decided that a more personal approach would better accomplish Project objectives. Speaking engagements were therefore arranged so that staff could meet with local groups, explain the nature of the Project, and answer questions about it. Presentations were made to such organizations as the Junior League, church groups, and Memphis State classes. Participants in the meetings were informed as to the problems which lead to youth crime and the inadequacy of the present system for meeting the needs of juvenile offenders. Then, the goals and plans of the Project were explained as a proposed method of solving some of these problems.

The objective of these presentations was to build a base of community support for diversion. One of the advantages to this approach was that it allowed Project staff personally to address concerns raised by participants, thereby eliminating unfounded fears before they became sources of opposition. This approach also enabled Project staff to obtain a better reading of community opinion on such a program.

MEDIA

As time has passed, the Project has slowly shifted its focus more toward use of the media. Two articles on the program were featured in local papers in the first few months of the Project. Since that time,

the Project has attempted to cultivate resources for support-building offered by the newspapers, television, and radio.

More specifically, the Project has sought to identify individuals in each media who have demonstrated an interest in the program. When Project Director Whitaker believes he has information they might find useful, he has contacted them. He has also invited the media to certain functions, such as the Memphis State Co-op conferences. As a result, the Project has continuously received positive publicity both for diversion itself and the other activities the Project has sponsored in the community.

In addition, the Project has become an expert resource in the field of juvenile justice and a resource on that subject for the media. The project staff has been contacted a number of times to offer an opinion and advice on issues which extend beyond diversion of youth. The fact that the media has such a resource to turn to has strengthened its positive opinion of the Project. The continuing appearance and quotation of Project staff in the media has helped build the Project's credibility.

PUBLIC SUPPORT

The result of these various Project efforts has been the development of a strong base of community support for diversion. It should be noted, however, that a major contributing factor to this support stems from the Project's success in handling diverted youth. The dissemination of statistical evaluations has reinforced the Project's image. Even more important has been the fact that no diverted youth to date has committed a subsequent crime serious enough to ignite public outrage. However, even if such an event should occur, it is reasonable to assume that the community and media support will be forthcoming.

SECTION V: CONCLUSION--PLANNING FOR SUCCESSFUL DIVERSION EFFORTS

There is little question that certain features and conditions of the Memphis environment have increased its conduciveness to a diverison program. In particular, the lack of police opposition, the philosophical commitment of Judge Turner to limited justice system penetration of youth, the small number of professional probation staff, the shrinking clientele of community agencies, and the relatively low level of public concern about delinquency all were factors contributing to the ultimate effectiveness of the Special Emphasis Diversion Project.

However, the mere presence of these elements did not predestine success. On the contrary, the off-setting influences arising from the recent CYSS experience, a long history of interagency rivalry, suspicion directed toward the new program, and the nature of the target population threatened to disrupt or even derail the Project in its earliest stages. The development and implementation of the strategy described herein made possible the circumvention of this scenario and the capitalization on existing positive factors.

Beyond demonstrating specific guidelines and implementation procedures to follow in building support for similar efforts, the Memphis experience is instructive in suggesting five overarching objectives to which a diversion project must address itself in planning and achieving success in this area.

I. RECOGNITION OF VULNERABILITY

One of the most common mistakes made by juvenile diversion program administrators is to underestimate or discount the degree which such an effort is dependent on the good will of others. A director of this type of project must be acutely aware that, while at least some degree of support is needed from each of the three principal impact audiences, it rarely materializes as a matter of course. Consequently, a firm commitment to building such support is required and must be carried out.

II. IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL OPPOSITION AND SUPPORT

During the planning stages of the project, staff must identify the sources and nature of potential opposition to their efforts. It is not sufficient to assume that the support of one segment of an impact audience guarantees a similar attitude from the other parts. For example, a number of youth diversion projects have discovered, to their ongoing frustration that, while the judge supports them, the probation staff presents continued resistance. Alternately, it is inadequate to believe that hostility from one part of an impact audience precludes the possibility of beneficial supporters in another.

Having identified both friends and foes, it is then necessary to make a determination as to the reasons behind the positions of each. This information will provide the foundation for the development of an appropriate strategy.

III. DEVELOPING A STRATEGY

Based on the information collected, a strategy should be developed for maximizing the diversion project's opportunities for success in building support. Potential backers must be cultivated and plans designed to capitalize on this resource. At the same time, assessments must be made as to what remedies, compromises, or modifications in procedures can be employed to ease or overcome opposition without adversely affecting program objectives. Depending on the specifics of a situation, methods of identifying and positively involving individuals or organizations that would otherwise have no role or interest in diversion should be explored.

IV. EARLY IMPLEMENTATION OF SUPPORT BUILDING TECHNIQUES

Too often, efforts to build support by diversion programs are undertaken either during a crisis situation or after months of failure because of opposition. As the Memphis experience clearly indicates, activities toward this end should commence early in the planning process. By including individuals from a variety of different types of organizations (and, in particular, the juvenile court) at this stage, the program can establish a base of support on which it can build and depend throughout its operation. In Memphis, preparation for the expansion of this support was timed so that such activities could begin concurrently with the program's operation. Finally, another important reason for starting efforts in this area at the outset is to highlight them as a priority for the duration of the project.

V. NECESSITY OF ONGOING SUPPORT BUILDING EFFORTS

By their very nature, juvenile diversion projects endure a precarious existence. Always lurking is the possibility that a project youth might commit some further offense serious enough to raise a public outcry. Regardless of the success rate to date, it seems inevitable at such times that the efficacy of diversion is called into question with accompanying charges of project irresponsibility. It may not take many situations of this type to result in a precipitous end to the project. Less extreme, but potentially equally damaging, is the loss of interest by key community individuals or groups. Regardless of the reason, if at any point the juvenile justice system or community agencies cease to view their relationships with a diversion program as a positive asset, the effectiveness of the project is jeopardized. Consequently, efforts to build support must be ongoing throughout the life of a project. The loyalty of any group cannot be taken for granted nor assumed to be permanent. Organizational needs change with time and a diversion program must be prepared in advance to respond effectively to new situations.

It has been noted that the success of the Memphis-Metro Youth Diversion Project in building support for its efforts cannot be attributed to some unique interplay of environmental factors. Similarly, this success has not been derived from the employment of revolutionary concepts

unknown to the world of social service programming. On the contrary, the necessity of building credibility and employing a nonthreatening stance, as well as the virtues of mutually beneficial strategies, have been acclaimed for years by theorists and practitioners alike. Unfortunately, however, such recommendations have often gone unheeded by those who would benefit from them the most. The Memphis Special Emphasis Project, on the other hand, has adhered to these planning principles and implemented them to their best advantage. In the end, the products of this commitment may be the major underlying reason for the success of this Project in a field where many have failed.

• U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1979 281-307/25